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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7244
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9319
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2067
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002396

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

U.S. Special Envoy Sen. George Mitchell to Israel, West Bank

Key stories in the media:

Yediot reported that President Obama has moved his scheduled speech at the United Jewish Communities General Assembly (GA) in order not to meet with PM Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the conference.

Media reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu will meet with U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell again this afternoon in an attempt to find a way to allow the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table. HaQaretz cited the admission of senior U.S. officials that the talks have reached an impasse. HaQaretz reported that yesterday Mitchell met with Netanyahu's senior aide Yitzhak Molcho and later held consultations with his own advisers. HaQaretz cited quoted a source in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that the Palestinians were clearly the problem, adding that there was full agreement between Israel and the U.S. The media reported that yesterday Netanyahu hit out at the Palestinian Authority over its demand for a complete Israeli settlement freeze before embarking on any fresh peace talks, saying he hoped the Palestinians would "get a grip" and drop this precondition. "We've done things that have not been done until today, although while we are taking steps toward negotiations, we have encountered preconditions demanded by the Palestinian side, which were never demanded before," Netanyahu was quoted as saying at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting.

Media reported that the Palestinians have rejected Israel's offer to reduce settlement construction, rather than bringing it to a complete halt. Pointing an accusing finger at the U.S., the Palestinians said yesterday that Washington's backing for Israeli refusal to halt Jewish settlement expansion had killed any hope of reviving peace negotiations soon. The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday PA officials warned that Washington's failure to force Israel to halt all construction in the settlements would lead to an "explosion." The officials also criticized Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statements in Jerusalem in which she backed PM Benjamin Netanyahu's position on the issue of settlements, calling his moratorium on new construction Qunprecedented." The Jerusalem Post reported that an official in Ramallah told the daily that the "mask has fallen off the face" of President Obama. The Palestinian official was quoted as saying that the U.S. has once again demonstrated that it's not an "honest broker" in Middle East because of its "bias" in favor of Israel.

FM Avigdor Lieberman said yesterday in an interview with IDF Radio that at this current juncture, an interim agreement with the Palestinians should be pursued, rather than a final settlement. Lieberman was quoted as saying: QIf you are asking if within the next few years it would be possible to achieve comprehensive peace with the Palestinians to end the conflict, then [the answer is] 'No'." The FM stressed the importance of improving the situation on the ground, suggesting that a Qlong-term interim agreementQ was the Qmost obviousQ next step toward quiet on the Israeli-Palestinian front, rather than a comprehensive peace agreement. A Palestinian state would not be established within the framework of an interim agreement, he clarified, adding that the QPalestinian state is not an interim objective, but the goal it was also the goal of the Roadmap."

All media led with an announcement yesterday by Shin Bet and the Israel Police that they had arrested Yaakov (QJackQ) Teitel, an American-born settler from Shvut Rahel allegedly behind an unprecedented series of deadly terrorist shootings and bombings spanning 12 years, in which two Arabs were killed and Israel Prize laureate Prof. Ze'ev Sternhell was wounded. According to Shin Bet, he also planted a bomb at the entrance to house of a messianic Jewish couple in Ariel, seriously wounding their son, Ami Ortiz, who was then 15. The media reported that Teitel procured his weapons in the U.S. and smuggled them into Israel in a container he was entitled to bring as a new immigrant and in the hold of a British Airways commercial airliner. Israel Radio quoted a senior Shin Bet official as saying that it is likely that other such Jewish activists exist and that they may be planning attacks. Media quoted Israelis as saying that the Florida resident was known to the U.S. authorities and wanted for his alleged involvement in violent crimes there, prior to his second immigration to Israel in 2000. Israel Radio reported that opposition head and Kadima chair Tzipi Livni told a forum of his party that it is necessary to educate against hate crimes. The media dubbed him a QJewish terroristQ (banners in Yediot and Maariv). The media quoted Left-wing figures as saying that Teitel is but one of the far RightQs Qwild weed.Q The Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories distanced itself from Teitel. The media quoted right-wing activists as saying that Teitl is a Qlone gunmen.

Maariv reported that next week, as part of the Juniper Cobra 10 exercise, the IDF and the U.S. Army will simulate the interception of a missile above Israel.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the human rights organization Gisha has petitioned the administrative court of Tel Aviv District Court, charging that the Government has violated the Freedom of Information Law regarding the disclosure of its criteria for determining which goods being allowed into Gaza are considered "humanitarian." The organization also demanded to see a government document entitled "Red Lines," which reportedly determines the minimum required food intake required by Gaza residents according to age and sex categories to sustain themselves.

Yediot cited a report in the German weekly Der Spiegel that allegedly describes the destruction by Israel of a Syrian nuclear reactor and surrounding events.

U.S. Special Envoy Sen. George Mitchell to Israel, West Bank:

Block Quotes:

I. QWashington Is Waiting for Rais Abbas

Columnist Shmuel Rosner, who was HaQaretzQs correspondent in Washington, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/2): QThe Obama administrationQs efforts to make the Arabs compromise with Israel have failed so far. The PresidentQs emissaries -- as the President himself -- have failed.... Washington knows that there wonQt be significant achievements until political questions disheartening the President of the Palestinian Authority are arranged and the fate of the elections for the Palestinian presidency is known.... In late October, [Secretary] Clinton sounds different from in June. When Israel is happy, the Palestinians are frowning. Of course the Palestinians will not say it openly, and will continue to talk about the urgent need for progress.... At this time they believe that a quiet dialogue is better -- moving forward as far as possible, helping the QRaisQ wherever possible, and wait for good news.

II. QItQs Not Peace, Madam Secretary

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/2): QU.S. generals, and even Israeli ones, have confirmed that the Palestinians have fulfilled the precondition set for them [in the Roadmap]. It's hard to find anyone who will say this about the Israelis.... To build during negotiations on land that the entire world claims is not yours -- that's something else. The main thing is that Netanyahu promised in his Bar-Ilan speech that he supports two states for two peoples. Even Hillary Clinton said this was wonderful.... Obama has pleaded with friendly Arab leaders to grant Israel an advance on future concessions [included in the Arab peace initiative] to prepare the groundwork for the peace process. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and a few Gulf leaders agreed to launch initial steps of reconciliation. But even they, like Obama, had a precondition: freezing settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They did not ask for anything more than what Clinton announced a few months ago: a complete cessation without natural growth, without illegal outposts and without excuses.... If Hamas lacked a reason to reject the initiative for reconciliation with Fatah and wait patiently for another round of the Qpeace processQ to go the way of its predecessors, and have the West Bank return to its bosom, then Mrs. Clinton supplied just such a reason, in a big way.

III. QObamaQs Best Friends

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/2): QIt seems that Netanyahu has reached the conclusion that IsraelQs major problem -- with the Palestinians. Iran, Turkey, and Goldstone -- is the weakness of the Obama administration. Since world leaders have reached the conclusion that Obama is weak, they allow themselves to go wild. Iran continues to develop its nuclear arsenal; Abu Mazen presents impossible conditions prior to negotiations; Erdogan woos Syria and Iran and incites against Israel; and Goldstone sanctifies norms that will make any war against terror fail in the future. The world is bustling humiliating America by spitting at Israel. The conclusion reached by Netanyahu is interesting: instead of confronting the Obama administration, he is obligated to embrace it.

IV. QClinton Understands Israel

Former Editor-in-Chief Moshe Ishon wrote in the editorial of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (11/2): Q[Secretary] ClintonQs task isnQt a simple one. Various sources say that over the past few months Abu Mazen has lost his influence on the Palestinian Authority. The terrorist organizations dictate the [PAQs] policy. Abu MazenQs situation is difficult. Clinton understands it perfectly and acts accordingly by extending her hand to the Israelis. A comprehensive regional agreement looks more distant than ever.

IV. QChange of Policy or QNo Choice

The ultra-Orthodox Yated NeQeman editorialized (11/2): QOne may assume that NetanyahuQs assent to a massive freeze of construction and his being satisfied with minor construction that will almost please the Israeli Right, is what convinced the [U.S.] administration that nothing can be obtained from the current Israeli government.... Washington reached the conclusion that there is no real alternative.

IV. QTerror against All

Ha'aretz editorialized (11/2): QBy his own confession, implicating himself in two murders and 10 other acts of terrorism, Yaakov (Jack) Teitel should be regarded as one of the most dangerous terrorists ever to operate in Israel and the territories. Teitel is different from the Jewish terrorists who preceded him in that he did not distinguish between his Palestinian targets and the Israelis whose political ideas he opposed, such as Professor Zeev Sternhell.... Terrorism of Teitel's kind reflects a boundless hatred of entire populations. It will take generations to eradicate, but there are already lessons to be drawn from this case. Intelligence gathering and law enforcement against extremist elements in the settlements must be stepped up, and attacks on Palestinians must be more thoroughly investigated.

VI. QWhy Does the U.S. Insist on Playing IranQs Game?

The Director of the Interdisciplinary Center's Global Research in International Affairs Center, columnist Barry Rubin, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/2): QAfter interviewing officials, the Financial Times reports that the Europeans are ready to reject Iran's demands now as Qunacceptable but the United States is Qmore willing to show patience than either Britain [or] France.Q Why is the U.S. Government so eager to keep playing Tehran's game? Here are two answers: [A)] President Barack Obama's worldview insists that all problems are resolvable by talking and making concessions. He also fears confrontation. [B)] The desire to keep Russia on board. But we know Russia won't support sanctions and serious pressure on Iran. Moscow wants America to fail internationally and views Iran as an ally. So America's policy is being held hostage by a president with no experience and little understanding of international affairs, a set of ideas making failure inevitable, trying to please a country which is an ally of the adversary and misestimating a dictatorial regime with boundless ambitions and tremendous self-confidence. What a mess. But how long into 2010 can they spin this before Washington is going to have to recognize that talks are going nowhere?

